

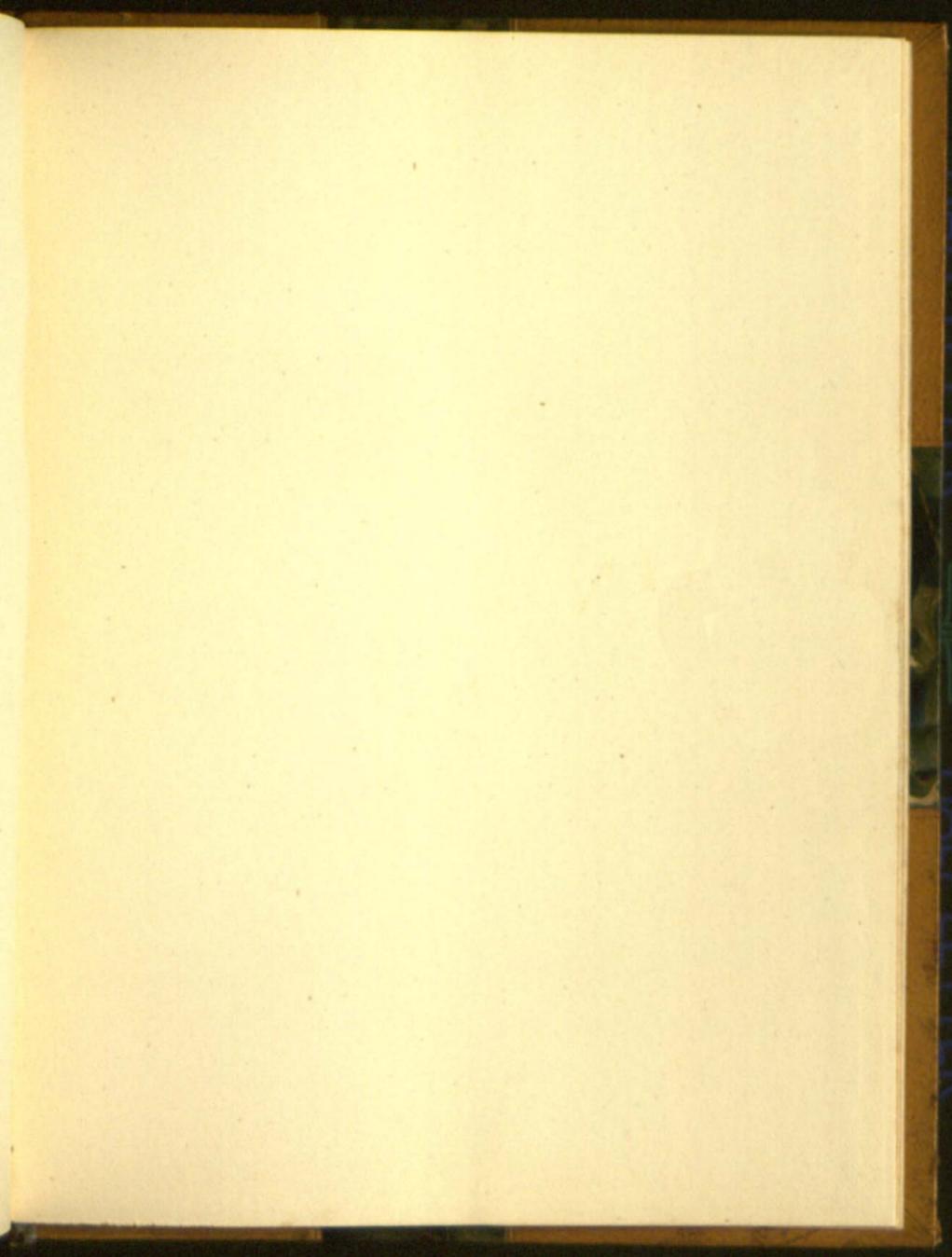






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THE LEGEND
OF
“The Briar Rose.”

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"The Briar Rose."

A SERIES OF PICTURES

PAINTED BY

E. BURNE JONES, A.R.A.

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“THE BRIAR ROSE.”



ANY years ago there lived a king and queen who had an only daughter. She was so beautiful that at her birth, the king knew not what to do for joy, and he appointed a great feast to celebrate it. He invited not only his relations and friends, and his whole court, but also the wise women, in order that they might be kind and bestow favours upon the new-born princess. There were thirteen of these women in his kingdom; but as he had only twelve gold trenchers for them to eat off, he could not invite them all; so one was left out. The twelve who were invited came; and when the feast was over, they began to bestow their wonderful gifts upon the child. One gave her virtue, a second beauty, a third riches, a fourth modesty, and so on with everything that is good and valuable in the whole world. But just as the eleventh had finished bestowing her gift, in came the thirteenth, who had not been invited, and began to threaten vengeance for the affront which the king had put upon her. “The

maiden," she said, "when she comes to her fifteenth year, shall pierce her hand with a spindle, and shall fall down dead!" At this the king and queen were grieved beyond measure; but the twelfth fairy, who had not yet bestowed her gift, stepped forward and spoke. She could not, indeed, she said, prevent what her sister had determined, but she could mitigate it. "The king's daughter," she continued, "shall not die, but she shall fall into a deep sleep, which shall last a hundred years; at the end of which time a king's son shall awaken her; and when she falls asleep, the whole palace will sleep with her." The king, who was very anxious, if possible, to ward off this misfortune from his dear child, made a proclamation, that every spindle should be sent out of the kingdom, and that none should be seen over all the land until the princess had passed her fifteenth year. In the meantime the wishes of the fairies came to pass, for the maiden grew up so beautiful, so modest, so amiable, and so intelligent, that no one who saw her could help immediately loving her.

Now it happened one day, when she was nearly fifteen years old, that the young princess was wandering about the palace, hither and thither, as her fancy led her, when she came at last to an old tower. Here she saw a narrow staircase, which she mounted, and

then she came to a little door. In the lock of the door there was a rusty key, and when she turned it round, the door sprang open, and there she saw, sitting in the corner of a little room, a very old woman, who was busily employed with her spinning-wheel. "Ah! old granny," said the king's daughter, "what are you about there?" "I am spinning," answered the old woman, and nodded her head to the princess. "How merrily that thing goes round!" spoke the maiden, taking the spindle in her hand; "let me try if I can spin too." But scarcely had she touched the spindle when she pierced her hand with it, and the enchantment took effect. That moment she fell down, and sank into a deep sleep. Then came her maidens, and carried her to a chamber, and laid her upon a beautiful couch; and no sooner was this done than the king and queen, the servants, and the whole court, and everything about the castle, fell asleep likewise; and all that had the breath of life was still, and slept.

And now a hedge of thorns began to grow all round the castle, which every year became higher and thicker, until at last it closed in the whole building, and not even the chimney tops could be seen. And the story of the beautiful sleeping Thorn-rose (for thus was the princess named) was told throughout the

land; so that from time to time many kings' sons came, and tried to force their way through the hedge into the castle. But it was all in vain; for the boughs kept together as tightly as if they had clasped each other's hands, so that the youths stuck fast among the thorns, and could not get out; and after struggling and tumbling about for a long time, they one by one succumbed to the spell.

After many long years had flown by, there came another king's son through the land; and he heard by chance, from an old man, the story of the thorn-hedge, and the kings' sons who had been killed by it. The old man also told him how it was said that there stood a castle on the other side of the hedge, and in the castle the beautiful Princess Thorn-rose slept, and with her the king and queen and the whole household. Then the youth said to him: "The thorn-hedge shall not frighten me. I will force my way through it, for I am resolved to see the beautiful Princess Thorn-rose, if it should cost me my life."

But the day was now at hand when the hundred years were to expire, and the spell to be dissolved. And when the prince approached the hedge, the thorns appeared to his sight only beautiful flowers; which separated before him of themselves, and allowed him to pass through unhurt; and when he had passed, he

saw them close themselves again, and stand up like a great wall behind him. He entered the castle, and looked around him with astonishment. He found the guards all asleep at their posts; in the great hall the king on his throne asleep, surrounded by his sleeping councillors. He walked on, and all was so still that he could hear his own breath; and at last he went up a winding stair and opened the door of the chamber in which Thorn-rose slept. He went near to the princess, and as she lay there, all still and motionless, she looked so beautiful that he could not take his eyes off her; at last he stooped down, and kissed her. Thus was the spell broken, and the princess aroused from her trance; and the whole court awoke, and the breath of life was stirred again in all.



I.

The Briarwood.

“ The fateful slumber floats and flows
About the tangle of the rose ;
But lo ! the fated hand and heart
To rend the slumberous curse apart ! ”



2.

The Council Room.

“ The threat of war, the hope of peace,
The Kingdom’s peril and increase
Sleep on, and bide the latter day,
When Fate shall take her chain away.”

3. The Garden Court.

“ The maiden pleasance of the land
Knoweth no stir of voice or hand,
No cup the sleeping waters fill,
The restless shuttle lieth still.”



4. The Rosebower.

“ Here lies the hoarded love, the key
To all the treasure that shall be ;
Come fated hand the gift to take,
And smite this sleeping world awake.”

WILLIAM MORRIS.

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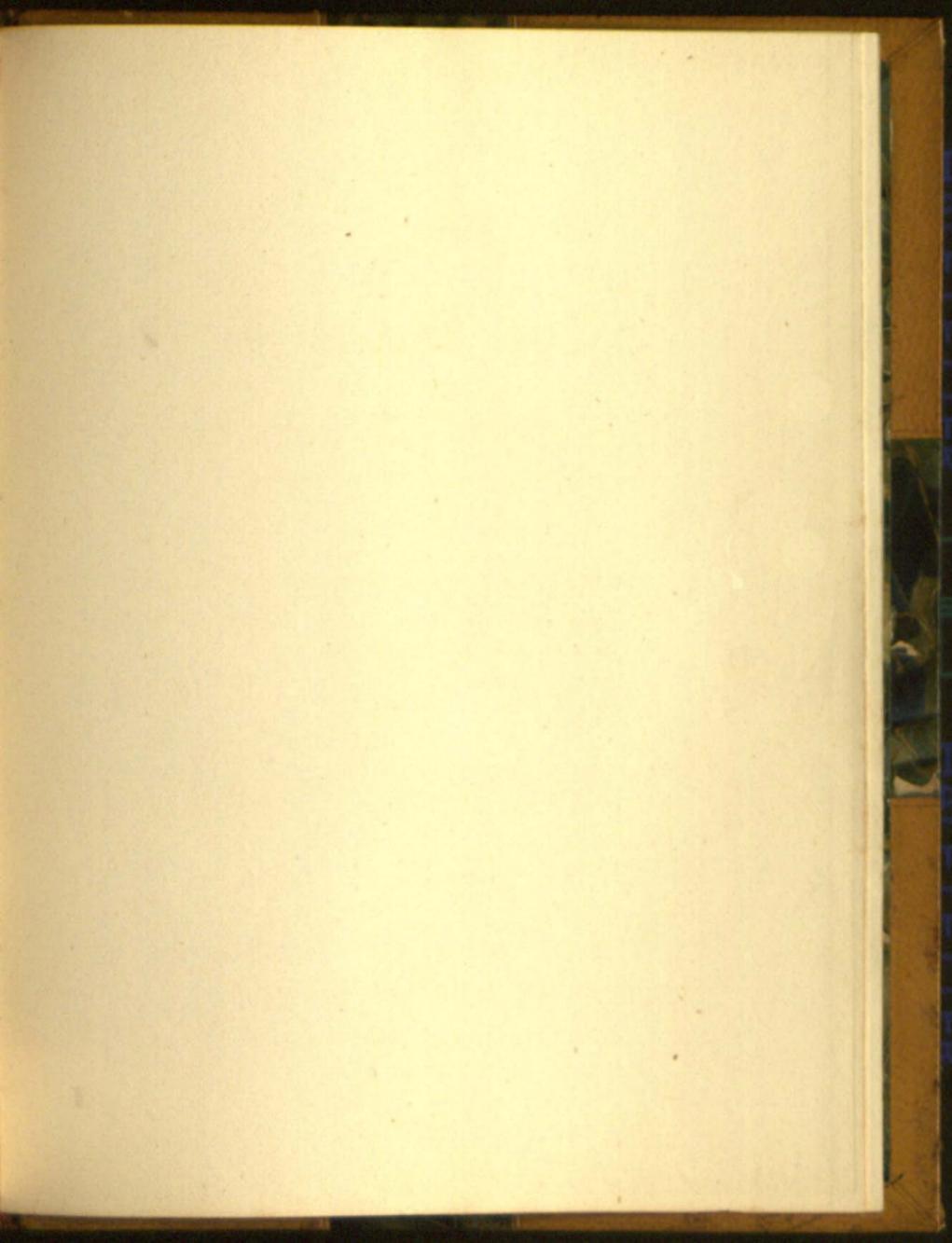
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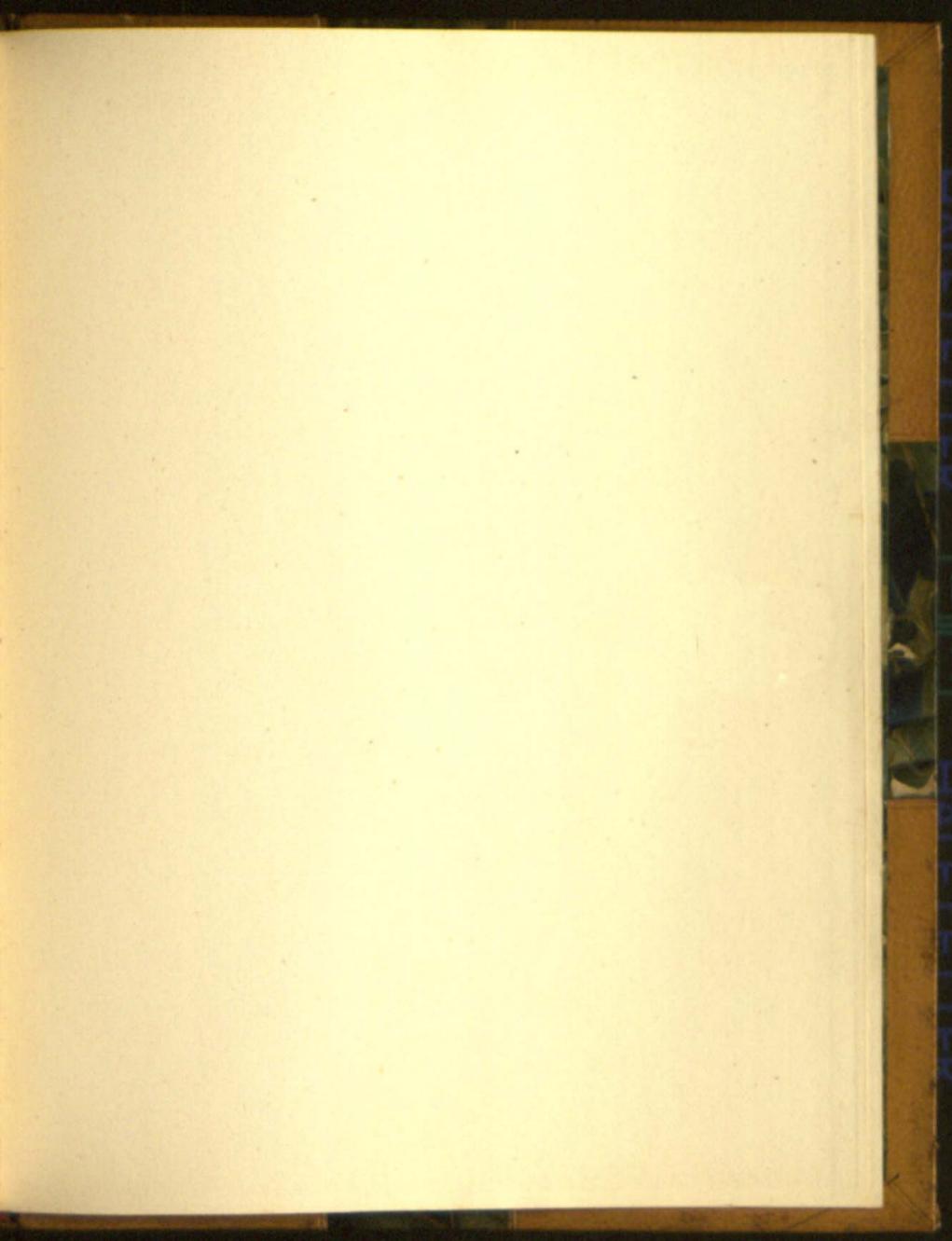
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